



Climate change policy responses for Canada's Inuit population: The importance of and opportunities for adaptation

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Abstract:

We identify and examine how policy intervention can help Canada's Inuit population adapt to climate change. The policy responses are based on an understanding of the determinants of vulnerability identified in research conducted with 15 Inuit communities. A consistent approach was used in each case study where vulnerability is conceptualized as a function of exposure-sensitivity to climatic risks and adaptive capacity to deal with those risks. This conceptualization focuses on the biophysical and human determinants of vulnerability and how they are influenced by processes and conditions operating at multiple spatial-temporal scales. Case studies involved close collaboration with community members and policy makers to identify conditions to which each community is currently vulnerable, characterize the factors that shape vulnerability and how they have changed over time, identify opportunities for adaptation policy, and examine how adaptation can be mainstreamed. Fieldwork, conducted between 2006 and 2009, included 443 semi-structured interviews, 20 focus groups/community workshops, and 65 interviews with policy makers at local, regional, and national levels. Synthesizing findings consistent across the case studies we document significant vulnerabilities, a function of socio-economic stresses and change, continuing and pervasive inequality, and magnitude of climate change. Nevertheless, adaptations are available, feasible, and Inuit have considerable adaptive capacity. Realizing this adaptive capacity and overcoming adaptation barriers requires policy intervention to: (i) support the teaching and transmission of environmental knowledge and land skills, (ii) enhance and review emergency management capability, (iii) ensure the flexibility of resource management regimes, (iv) provide economic support to facilitate adaptation for groups with limited household income, (v) increase research effort to identify short and long term risk factors and adaptive response options, (vi) protect key infrastructure, and (vii) promote awareness of climate change impacts and adaptation among policy makers. (C) 2009 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

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Resource Description

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Unspecified Exposure

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Arctic, Ocean/Coastal, Rural

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Non-U.S. North America

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Health Outcome Unspecified

Intervention:

strategy to prepare for or reduce the impact of climate change on health

A focus of content

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern:

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Racial/Ethnic Subgroup

Other Racial/Ethnic Subgroup: Canadian Inuit

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Policy/Opinion, Research Article

Resilience:

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content

